

## Frequently Asked Passport Questions

*Our Passport Unit at the American Embassy in Paris is a busy place. Yearly, we issue over several thousand passports and register the births of many children. One of the prime functions of the Passport Unit is to provide information and guidance on passport questions. Below are the most common questions we get concerning American passports.*

**Q: Passport Photographs: I can take my own passport photographs. Will you accept them? What are the requirements for correct photos?**

**A:** *U.S. passport photos are significantly different from other types of passport photos. French photo booth photographs and many others are **NOT** acceptable for U.S. passport issuance. Computer scanned images may not be accepted.*

*Please obtain **one** photograph per the [State Department's Passport Photo Requirements](#). Your photo must have a white, light or neutral off white background. We recommend you use a professional passport photo service to ensure your photo meets all the requirements; specify that they are for a U.S. passport. Do **NOT** staple the photo to your application; include it in a separate envelope or paperclip it to the application only. Failure to submit the correct photographs will result in significant processing delays.*

**Q: Social Security Number: Do I have to provide it on my application?**

**A:** Social Security numbers:  
*Providing a U.S. Social Security Number in box # 5 is mandatory if the applicant has been issued a number. (26 USC § 6039E of the Internal Revenue Code states that if an applicant fails to provide this information he or she is subject to a \$500 fine.) If the applicant does not currently have an SSN and does not wish to obtain an SSN, then he/she should fill in the passport application SSN box # 5 with zeros. Contact the [Federal Benefits Unit in Paris](#) for questions concerning your social security number.*

**Q: Chronopost envelopes: I want to use another type of envelope for my passport application. Which one can I use? What happens if my passport does not arrive?**

**A.** ***The passport office only accepts Chronopost envelopes for this service. No other types of envelopes are accepted.** Please remember to note down your tracking number and call the Chronopost office to locate your envelope if your passport does not arrive within two weeks from the date that you submitted your application.*

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**Q: Online appointments: I can't make a passport appointment at the time I want. What should I do?**

**A:** *The appointment calendar shows times for all consular services, therefore, please make sure you schedule your appointment at the appropriate time.*

*Our server will instruct you to print your appointment page, however, you do not need to do this; just keep a record of the **Appointment UID**, and **Appointment Password** in order to change or cancel your appointment.*

*If all the slots for the time you want are already taken, you will need to choose another time or another day. We do not overbook appointments to prevent you and others from having to wait a lot longer for service.*

*If all the children's times are filled on a day you have chosen, please do not go to the adult times. Go to a different day instead. You may put a note next to your name ("Person Accompanying Applicant") that you prefer a different day, if it is really important to you. If we have a cancellation on your preferred date, we will happily move your appointment and notify you by e-mail. Go to passport [appointment instructions](#) page.*

**Q: Emergencies: I have a life or death emergency in the U.S., and need a passport. What should I do?**

**A:** *Life or Death Emergencies involve serious illness, injury, or death in your immediate family that require you to travel within 24-48 hours to a country that requires a passport. Customers must appear in person at a passport agency for emergency service and documentation of the emergency may be requested. Customers should schedule an [online passport appointment](#) for the next business day in order to apply for a passport for imminent travel. You may also refer to our website page on [emergency passports](#). Remember, emergency passports are valid for 3 months or less, it is always better to apply for a full-validity passport. Please note that two consecutive emergency passports cannot be issued and that an application for a full-validity passport takes approximately two weeks to process.*

**Q: Help! My passport should have arrived, but I have not received it. What do I do?**

**A:** *Contact us by [e-mail](#). We will respond to routine passport questions within 48 hours.*

**Q: I'm renewing my passport. Do I get the old one back?**

**A:** *Yes, we return the old, cancelled passports to you. It is a good idea to keep it in a safe place as it is considered proof of your U.S. citizenship.*

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**Q: I need more visa pages, but I already added two sets. Can I add a third set of pages?**

**A:** No. You may only add two sets of visa pages to a valid passport. You must renew your passport.

**Q: If I am eligible to renew my passport by mail can I still come to the Embassy to do this? How long does it take to get a passport when I apply by mail?**

**A:** If you are an adult with a 10-year passport (expired or still valid) issued within the last 15 years, you should submit your Passport Renewal by Mail. This convenience to you will save you time and money. You will not need to come to the embassy, wait in security lines, or wait in the waiting room for your appointment. You can apply by mail for your passport from the comfort of your own home with the passport to be returned to you in approximately one to two weeks. During peak season travel periods, or before holidays, we encourage to send in passport applications as soon as possible.

**Q: Minor children: It is true that passport applications for minors under 16 require the consent of both parents and legal guardians?**

**A:** Effective February 1, 2008, Public Law 106-113, Section 236 requires that U.S. passport applications for children under the age of 16 require both parents' or legal guardians' consent. Read additional information on the [Two-Parent Consent Requirement](#).

**Q: My child is too young to sign his/her own passport. How do I sign my child's passport?**

**A:** For children under age 16, in the space provided for the signature, the mother or father must print the child's name and sign their own name. Then, in parenthesis by the parent's name, write the word (mother) or (father) so we know who signed for the child. Children under age 16 must NOT sign their passports.

**Q: How long is a passport valid and when should I renew it?**

**A:** If you were **over age 16** when your passport was issued, your passport is valid for **10 years**.

If you were **age 15 or younger** when your passport was issued, your passport is valid for **5 years**.

The Issue Date of your passport can be found on the data page of your Passport Book or on the front of your Passport Card.

If possible, you should renew your passport approximately nine (9) months before it expires. Some countries require that your passport be valid at least six (6) months beyond

*the dates of your trip. Some airlines will not allow you to board if this requirement is not met.*

*If you wait too long, you cannot renew an expired passport by mail. You have to apply in person and pay an extra fee.*

*During peak season travel periods or before holidays, we encourage to send in passport applications as soon as possible.*

**Q: If we don't plan to travel back to the United States any time soon, why should we renew our passports now? Who should maintain a valid U.S. passport?**

**A:** *The U.S. passport documents the citizenship status of the bearer and by law is proof of U.S. citizenship. Every American abroad should have valid proof of her or his citizenship at all times.*

*Life is unpredictable. In the event of an emergency involving a family member abroad, a short-notice airfare bargain, or an unexpected business trip, already having a valid U.S. passport will save time, money and stress.*

*A passport is required for countless French administrative purposes and you do not want to get caught with an expired passport when your "carte de séjour" comes up for renewal.*

**Q: I travel frequently and my passport is always at some embassy to obtain a visa. Can I get a second passport?**

**A:** *Generally, citizens are allowed to carry only one valid passport at a time. In some cases, the issuance of a second passport is possible: frequent travel and the delays due to visa applications; the presence of a stamp from one country that causes problems in another country. We will ask for justification from an employer or proof of compelling reasons for personal travel and you must make a personal appearance and online appointment. Please contact us for further information.*

**Have any questions?** [Write to us.](#)